

Hampton CITY PAGE

Your Tax Dollars at Work

• CITY PAGE • SEPTEMBER 5 • Published on 1st & 3rd Thursdays • SEPTEMBER 5 • CITY PAGE •

Volunteers are strengthening our community

"An institution, phenomenal, a man of wisdom, our greatest asset, everything to everybody, a role model, no greater volunteer in the world," are all ways in which Ernie Ferguson has been described. There are dozens of volunteers who donate hundreds of hours each month at Y.H. Thomas Community Center, meet Ernie Ferguson — one of the center's most dedicated.

It all began six years ago when Ernie, who at the time was a volunteer basketball coach for the Parks and Recreation Department, learned his neighborhood was working on opening Y.H. Thomas School as a community center. He decided to visit the center to see what he could do to help. When he arrived at the center, Will Moffett, the center's executive director, explained they were in need of weekend volunteers.

Ernie responded, "Great, anything you want me to do, I am here to do it."

From that day on and when the doors of the new community center opened, Ferguson has been there helping in any way he can.

Ferguson has boundless energy and an easy smile even when he recounts how he was bound to a wheelchair for 10 years. Told by his doctors he would never walk again, he promised himself that if he were ever able to get out of his wheelchair, he would never stop.

He has kept that promise. Even when he was struck by a car a few years ago while riding his bike to the center. Center volunteers recall how their concern made them send him home when Ferguson would show up while he was still recuperating. Now recovered, he still rides his bike to and from the center each day.

"This man averages over 40 hours a week coaching football and basketball, keeping the facility clean, and assisting with the Kids Café," said Moffett. "Ernie is one of our greatest assets because he is always there to create a warm and nurturing environment for both the young people and adults who come to the facility."

Besides volunteering at the center, Ferguson found time to become a certified basketball, football and track coach. He also single-handedly found hundreds of books for the center's library. And, he was instrumental in gathering tutoring supplies for the Kids Café program.

Ferguson feels strongly about children learning how to read.



Ernie Ferguson volunteers with youth at the Y.H. Thomas Community Center.

"When you know how to read, you can go lots of places in the world without ever leaving home. When you become engrossed in a book, it helps you imagine things you never could before."

Leroy Crosby, Chairman of the Athletic Association, says "Mr. Ferguson is a dedicated individual who has served the center well. He has sacrificed himself and his time to not only maintain the facility, but also in working with our youth. He gives his all."

President of the Y.H. Thomas Alumni Association, Sheila Williams says, "Ernie is Y.H. Thomas. He is at the center everyday, sun up to sun down, and is everything to everybody."

In June Ferguson was one of the citizen delegates chosen to represent Y.H. Thomas for the All-America City competition in Kansas City, Missouri. He proudly told the judges, as part of the presentation, "I'm 67 years old and I volunteer at Y.H. Thomas 40 hours a week."

Ferguson feels grateful to be part of the Y.H. Thomas volunteer family saying, "I love being here. They think I am helping them but what they don't know is that they are helping me."

He is also proud of his neighborhood saying, "It is not every day you see a community come together to work on behalf of their youth in the way Old North Hampton has."

Reflecting on his years at Y.H. Thomas he says, "You start with one child and you see it passed along. I have seen so much positive change, it is a wonderful thing."

Albert E. Simpson, Old North Hampton Community Organization President, says of Ferguson, "I could go on and on. Ernie's heart is really in it. His impact on Y.H. Thomas and consequently on the neighborhood as a whole has been phenomenal. I don't think you could find a more dedicated volunteer in the entire country."

For information or to volunteer, please call Neighborhood Office, 727-6460.

Unity Week

The Citizens' Unity Commission will offer a variety of activities September 9-13 to support "Unity Week — Hampton Unites in Kindness."

An event at Mill Point Park at 7 p.m. will mark the anniversary of September 11 with a candlelight vigil, honor guard, music, puppet skit and presentation of Hampton Heroes awards to Police, Fire and emergency dispatchers.

On September 10, a 7:30 p.m. free showing of "Pay it Forward" at Buckroe Park will help pave the way for showering acts of kindness on others.

Other activities during the week include dedication of a Unity Tree, support for United Way's Day of Caring and a celebration and reception to begin the week's activities.

All events will feature collection of canned and packaged food for the H.E.L.P. Community Food Pantry.

Also during the week residents are encouraged to call 311 to report acts of kindness and to sign up for Hampton Unites — Community Dialogues, a series of discussion groups to foster race relations. For information, call 311, 728-3279, or visit www.hampton.gov.



Bay Days turns 20!

Hampton Bay Days will celebrate its 20th anniversary this year. The celebration will take place this Friday through Sunday, September 6-8, in Downtown Hampton. Originally called Hampton Fair Days, the event has grown, attracting close to a half million people to the downtown waterfront each year.

Bay Days' goal is to pay tribute and salute the wonderful attributes of the Chesapeake Bay. The theme for this year's festival is "And the Bay Goes On...Healing our Bay and the USA."

Plans for the festival include an abundance of seafood vendors, a craft show featuring over 100 booths, six entertainment stages, Chesapeake Bay interactive exhibits, rides and amusements, Children's Area, car show, an Extreme skateboarding Arena, Saturday fireworks show and much more.

For more information, call 311, or visit www.baydays.org.

Note: Treasurer and Commissioner of the Revenue offices will close at noon on Sept. 6.

CERT — free emergency training



Know what to do in the event of a hurricane, tornado or other disaster? Community Emergency Response Training (CERT) will help prepare residents to help themselves and others.

The seven-week class will be held Tuesday evenings September 10 — October 19. Call 727-1094 for an application or visit www.hamptonfire.tn.net/prevention/cert.html.

Tune In!

Watch Crossroads Project Public Meeting on The City Channel TV-47

Weekdays, 6 p.m.

Interested in learning more about Hampton's convention center project? This program is a rebroadcast of the Aug. 28 public meeting and it details the project's feasibility report and aspects of the headquarters hotel deal.

Check www.hampton.gov or call 311 for more programs to watch on TV-47.

Calendar

SEPTEMBER 6-8 Hampton Bay Days

Visit Downtown Hampton for the Peninsula's biggest festival! Entertainment, Chesapeake Bay exhibits, crafts, rides, amusements and more. 727-8311, www.baydays.org.

SEPTEMBER 11 City Council

Regular meeting, 7:30 p.m., Council Chambers, City Hall, 727-6315. Agendas on Web site: hampton.gov/council. Meetings broadcast live; re-broadcasts Sept. 12 at 10 a.m., and Sept. 14 at 3 p.m. on The City Channel TV-47.

SEPTEMBER 13 Karla Bonoff

with Kenny Edwards
Singer, songwriter and hit maker, Karla Bonoff defines a generation in American popular music. It was in 1974 that Karla Bonoff first wrote a song for Linda Ronstadt who then recorded three of Karla's songs. Aaron Neville, Bonnie Raitt and many others helped seal her fate as one of the best singer/songwriters of her day. Karla Bonoff is joined in this concert by long time collaborator and former Ronstadt Band member, Kenny Edwards. The American Theatre, 8 p.m., 722-ARTS or www.hampton.gov/arts.

SEPTEMBER 14 Spectrum Puppets

Master puppeteer Regina Marscheider and her Spectrum Puppets spread smiles and joy wherever they perform. Their all new show, Rhythm and Strings, celebrates the joys of dance. Come marvel at the intricacies of master puppeteering and discover why Spectrum won the Outstanding Achievement Award from the Puppeteers of America! The American Theatre, 2 p.m., 722-ARTS, www.hampton.gov/arts.

SEPTEMBER 22 Grandview Nature Walk

This walk will introduce you to an undeveloped beach and salt marsh. Bring your family to see up close what plants and animals live there, and learn the history of the nature preserve. For information call 850-5134. From 1-2 p.m., Grandview Nature Preserve.

SEPTEMBER 24 Community Center Open House

Come check out what's going on at Old Hampton Community Center. Meet the staff and find out what recreation opportunities are available in your own backyard. Join us for refreshments and a tour of the center. For information call 727-1123, 5-8 p.m., Old Hampton Community Center.

For more events, go to www.hampton.gov and click "calendar."



The fall "Happenings" brochure will be inserted in the Daily Press on Friday, September 13 in Hampton only. Pick one up ... or look on www.hampton.gov/parks.

What's the latest on the Crossroads Project?

In its first full year of operation the Crossroads Project is expected to generate a \$5.6 million profit, according to feasibility studies released last week. Over its first 10 years, the project should generate more than \$70 million in tax revenue to the city. This is net new revenue, after operating expenses and bond repayment.

City Council members will consider these studies at their meeting on September 25 as part of their decision regarding issuance of bonds for the project.

The report provided by Economic Research Associates notes that a number of committed revenue sources will cover the debt service and operating costs for the project and show a profit of \$9 million over the first 10 years. These revenue sources include: dedicated meals and lodging taxes; interest from reserves on the Crossroads bonds; tax generated by the project's new hotel; and the two percent state sales tax reimbursement associated with the hotel.

"This is important to note, because it shows committed revenues will cover the debt service and operating costs, with money to spare," said James Peterson, city finance director.

The ERA report notes that convention center revenues and revenues associated with the Crossroads retail component, are projected to total almost \$62 million over the first 10 years. The Crossroads Project, located near Hampton

Coliseum at Coliseum Drive, includes the 320,000-square-foot Hampton Roads Convention Center, a headquarters-quality Embassy Suites hotel, and a combination of specialty retail, restaurants and entertainment venues.

Scheduled to be operational in early 2005, the project will attract thousands of convention delegates to Hampton from outside the region and will generate significant revenue through sales, meals, admissions and lodging taxes.

Private investment in the project is expected to exceed \$100 million. The city can also expect additional investment in the areas surrounding the project. Construction cost of the Hampton Roads Convention Center is approximately \$90 million. With interest during construction, a reserve fund, issuance expense, and bond insurance, the bond sizing would be approximately \$110 million. The city is financing the project through a "revenue bond." This means the loan will be repaid exclusively from revenues generated by the project.

Davenport and Co., the city's financial advisor, notes that current interest rates make this type of financing the best time in years to invest in a project such as Crossroads.

Analysis of the reports shows the Crossroads Project revenues from the convention center, hotel, and retail-related sales could perform as much as 96 percent below projected levels and still not impact the general fund for city services.

